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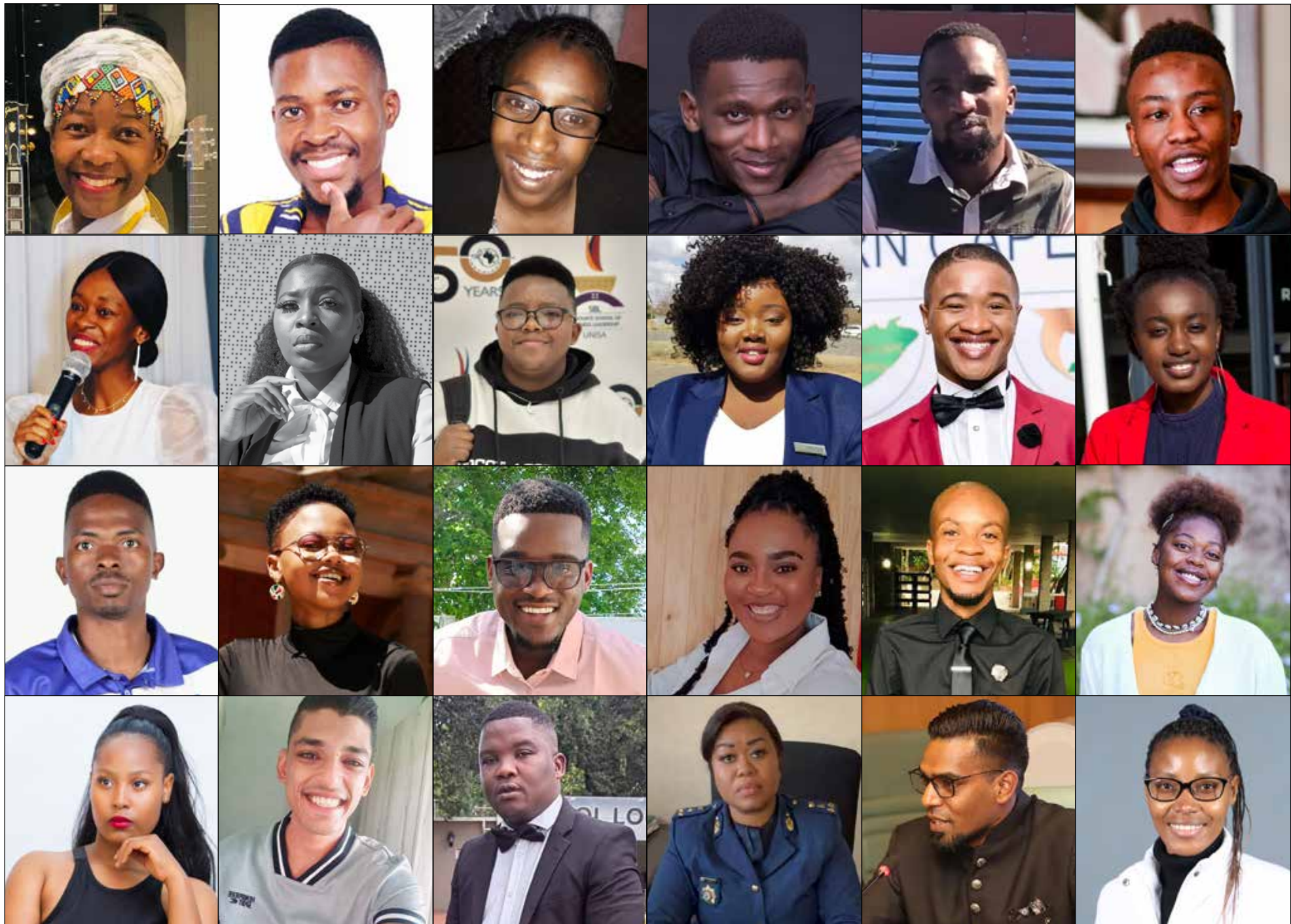
QUARTERLY EDITION

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Education News

NSFAS 2024 rollout open but questions



Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, faces questions over cuts to the NSFAS budget. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

LUCAS LEDWABA

In early 2022, Magdeline Makoša Ratsatsi applied to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) for herself and on behalf of her two younger siblings.

To her amazement, all three applications were approved. Mag-

deline, 30, is now a student at the University of South Africa where she's studying for a diploma in research and archiving.

Her sister is studying at a FET College in Limpopo. Both their tuition fees and related expenses are covered by the NSFAS. The third sibling is repeating matric but has already applied for next

year's funding rollout.

"I was happy that I was a beneficiary among more than one million other students countrywide," said Magdeline from Mentz village near Polokwane in Limpopo.

last month, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, announced at the opening of the 2024 funding rollout that in this current financial year, NSFAS is funding 1,6 million students. Applications opened officially on 21 November and will close on 31 January 2024.

Among the new measures introduced, Nzimande said students don't have to wait for their matric results to apply for NSFAS and that for this application period, there will be no supporting documents required at the time of applying.

He further revealed that in 2023, NSFAS continued to fund SA Social Security Agency (SASSA) beneficiaries in real-time.

"This year, SASSA beneficiaries account for 35% (526,970) of the funded students," Nzimande revealed.

In March, the SASSA revealed that 18,829,716 people were receiving various types of social grants in South Africa.

Like many NSFAS applicants, Magdeline and her siblings come from a single-parent family that depends on the state's welfare.

"I experienced financial problems since matriculating in 2011," she said.

In 2013 she received an NSFAS grant to study human resources management at the Capricorn TVET College in Polokwane and graduated two years later. But a string of unfortunate incidents plunged her and siblings into deeper financial trouble.

She has, however, worked in various roles as a community liaison officer in government projects and last year she decided to apply to NSFAS and pursue her studies.

NSFAS covers her book allowance to the tune of R5,046. She also receives R304 for transport plus 30 gigabytes of data monthly.

Her sister, who studies at the Letaba TVET College in Tzaneen, was covered for R6,000 for transportation and rent in her first semester. She received a further R10,000 to cover registration, transport and rental for the second semester.

"I think how they (NSFAS) are supporting us with data and transport is enough. I appreciate the way they implement it. The money they gave us is enough. I felt blessed to have that R5,000. It was the first time that I received such money," Magdeline reflected on the NSFAS support.

Nzimande said NSFAS has grown from disbursing R21.4 million in funding to almost

R48 billion "to fund children of the working class and the poor seeking to further their studies in public universities and TVET colleges".

In February, a meeting of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Innovation heard that the NSFAS received 978,402 first-time applications this year, which was a 14% growth compared to 2022. It was also revealed that NSFAS has funded over 657,000 new applicants, representing 66% of those who applied, 81% of whom were SASSA beneficiaries.

One such student is Tshupo Masike, 19, from Soshanguve in Tshwane.

The first-year BCom student at the University of Pretoria applied in November 2022 but experienced delays in getting approved.

"My application was stuck in one stage for a long time until around April/May this year when I was provisionally selected," he said.

Tshupo was raised by his unemployed mother and grandmother, who is a pensioner.

"It's tough for them to pay my fees. I didn't get a bursary so I applied for NSFAS funding," he said.

Tshupo who resides on campus in Pretoria receives R200 from his mother every month which he spends on toiletries and other basic needs.

Education News

linger over budget cuts



Trade union federation Cosatu says it is "pained" by the "reckless" cuts to the 2024 NSFAS Budget by the Minister of Finance, Enoch Godongwana. Photo: Google

NSFAS pays R14,400 for his meals on campus for one academic year and a further R3,000

for personal care which translates into a R301 monthly stipend. While the scheme has helped

millions of students access higher education, it hasn't been without challenges.

How to Apply for NSFAS Online 2024-2025

Application for the 2024-2025 academic cycle opened on 28 September 2023 and close on 31 January 2024. Please, be reminded that there will be no late application for any reason. Students are encouraged to apply within the period given by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) www.nsfas.org.za

Are you from a family with a household income of R350,000 or less and want to attend a Public University or TVET College? Then carefully read the following: You are eligible for a government grant by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The NSFAS covers the following: Registration fees, tuition fees, and allowances for learning materials, food, personal care, transportation, and accommodation.

NSFAS Application General Instructions for 2024

Below are the NSFAS Application instructions for applying for the 2024-2025 academic year.

- Before filling out the application form, please read the following notes carefully. Make sure that you read all of the sections and that the information you give is correct.
- All applicants should write their identity (ID) number in the top right-hand corner of all the pages of the application form and on every page of all supporting documents
- If you submit application forms without ALL the required supporting documents, your application will not be processed by NSFAS.

- The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) will process only the first application that will be received. No one is allowed to submit more than one application unless NSFAS requests you to do so.
- Your cellphone number or email address will be required by NSFAS in order to reach you during the application process. If you don't have an email address, it is necessary to create a free email account on Google at www.gmail.com, on Yahoo at www.yahoo.co.za, or any other free email service.
- NSFAS will use the cellphone number you provided on the application form to make payment for some of your student allowances by cellphone voucher in case your application is successful.
- If you don't have a bank account, you need to open one at any nearby bank such as Postbank, ABSA, Capitec, FNB, Standard Bank, Nedbank, or others. Some student allowances will be paid into your bank account.

The closing date for submitting all applications and other completed supporting documents for students who are already studying at a university or FET college, but who are applying for NSFAS financial aid for the first time, is 15 December for the following academic year.

NSFAS Required Supporting Documents for 2024 Application

If you want your application to be processed by NSFAS, please make sure you complete all sections of the application form and

attach all the required supporting documents. Below are the needed documents:

These include being late in paying out allowances, fees and accommodation resulting in some students missing classes or being evicted from their lodgings.

The NSFAS acknowledged its shortcomings in a blogpost saying "students had to wait for their allowance to be provided before they could register for the academic year, which meant they missed valuable learning time".

Tshupo also experienced a delay in receiving his allowance in June. "I never had a problem except that it once came late. I think this was at the time when they introduced a new system. I only got my June allowance at the end of July," he said.

Chantel King, the DA spokesperson on higher education, science and innovation said after Nzimande's announcement last month that the party wants him to clarify among other issues how the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) budget cuts for both NSFAS and universities will affect students and institutions.

on accrediting student accommodation service providers.

In his budget vote speech in May, Nzimande announced that NSFAS was funding 1.1 million students with a budget allocation of R47,6 billion in the 2023 academic year. He said of this amount, universities had been allocated R38,6 billion and TVET Colleges R8,9 billion.

However in his MTBPS in early November, the Minister of Finance Enoch Godongwana announced that in the current financial year government spending has been revised down by R21 billion and that further reductions of R64 billion in 2024/25 and R69 billion in 2025/26 are proposed.

Trade union federation Cosatu has added its voice to Godongwana's announcement of budget cuts saying it is "pained by reckless cuts in the MTBPS to NSFAS [of R3 billion]."

But Nzimande has expressed optimism, saying for NSFAS to successfully implement the funding of 2024, there needs to be closure of the 2023 funding cycle.

"This includes the finalisation of all the appeals and payment of all outstanding allowances for the academic year 2023. NSFAS committed that all appeals and the payment of outstanding allowances will be finalised this year," he said. - *Mukurukuru Media*



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DG's Corner



Basic Education Director-General Hurbert Mathanzima Mveli outlines the briefings and engagements around the BELA Bill in the article below. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

Deadline for comments on the BELA Bill set for 31 January 2024

HURBERT MWELI

Briefings and engagement around the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill passed in the National Assembly on 26 October 2023 have continued across provinces with the Department of Basic Education keen to hear from the public.

The Bill which has since been referred to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) for further processing is being debated at schools and public platforms.

The DBE subsequently briefed the Select Committee on Education and Technology, Sport, Arts and Culture on 8 November 2023, during a clause-by-clause analysis of the B-Bill version of the Bill.

Provincial online briefings and

face-to-face community engagements have taken place across provinces, with the deadline for written submissions indicated as 31 January 2024.

The DBE team was represented by James Ndlebe, Chief Director for Provincial Monitoring and Delivery Oversight, Adv Shalili Misiyer, Chief Director, and Noluvuyo Gela from Legal Services and Jabu Hlakula, Director for the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign.

Provincial briefings have taken place with the KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and the Mpumalanga Provinces.

During the provincial briefing with the Mpumalanga Department of Education, Head of Department (HoD) Lucy Moyane, said that, "the merger and closure

of schools is a challenge with 70 small schools with less than 100 learners attending, to be closed".

She also highlighted the importance of incorporating Grade R into the education system for the necessary financial and administrative support to be provided for teaching and learning to develop early learning skills. Community engagements in the Mpumalanga Province took place at the Mmamethlake Community Hall in the Nkangala District, Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality on 23 November. Additional engagements will be taking place at the Vukuzakhe Community Hall in the Gert Sibande District, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Local Municipality, on 29 November and at the Jeppes Reef Community Hall in the eHlanzeni District, Nkomazi Local Municipality, on 30 November.

James Ndlebe, Chief Director for Provincial Monitoring and Delivery Oversight, painted the background to the Bill, while summarising the main clauses:

"The BELA Bill is making amendments to certain sections of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1986 and the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) of 1998 to respond to administrative challenges facing schools to continue the transformation agenda of our education system. The Bill does not include matters related to curriculum, infrastructure, teachers and human resources, or inclusive education.

Among the amendments, is a provision that Grade R will now be the new compulsory school-starting age and parents who fail to enrol their children will be penalised.

The Bill confirms that corporal punishment is no longer allowed and that those found guilty of such offences will be penalised.

Home-educated children must be registered, and parents are allowed a curriculum of their choice as long as it is internationally recognised and not inferior to the curriculum offered in public schools. In terms of language policy, the Bill provides that a School Governing Body (SGB) of a public school will be required to submit its language policy and any amendment thereof to the HoD for approval as "it cannot be correct that SGBs are given unlimited and unchecked powers and have a final say in a school matter which is a public school".

The online briefing with the Gauteng Province took place on 30 November 2023.

sustainable growth," she said.

Minister's Corner

ECD lays the foundation for decolonisation of education on the African continent, says Motshekga

STAFF REPORTER

The direction to be considered in transforming the landscape of education in Africa, especially the need for innovative strategies such as integrating technology into education and revising curricula, is imperative said the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, when sharing her insights at a high-level conference on decolonisation in Johannesburg.

"These strategies can help bridge gaps exposed by recent crises and align with broader Sustainable Development Goals. It is a call to action to rethink and restructure educational frameworks in an equitable, inclusive and forward-thinking manner. By standing together and pooling our resources and expertise, we can recover from current setbacks and build stronger, more enduring educational foundations for future generations in Africa," she said.

Motshekga added that the journey towards building resilient education systems begins with a focus on Early Childhood Development (ECD). "According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), investing in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is highly efficient and effective for achieving equitable,

sustainable growth," she said.

Motshekga was speaking at the 10th Education International Africa Regional (EIRAF) Conference held at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg last month.

The Conference, which is a platform for the South African Government to share recent developments in the Basic Education Sector, as well as future plans around education reform, was attended by President Cyril Ramaphosa, accompanied by Basic Education Deputy Minister, Dr Reginah Mhaule, with delegates from across the African continent.

Also present were Gauteng MEC for Education, Matome Chiloane; Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Cllr Kabelo Gwamanda; Education International President, Susan Hopgood; Education International General-Secretary, Dr David Edwards; Education International African Region Chairperson, Dr Christian Addai-Poku; Education International Africa Director, Dr Dennis Sinyolo; the President of the South African Democratic Teacher Union (SADTU), Magope Maphila; and SADTU General-Secretary, Mungwena Maluleka.

During the Conference, participants were afforded an opportunity to share common



Basic Education Director-General Hurbert Mathanzima Mveli outlines the briefings and engagements around the BELA Bill in the article below. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

goals in terms of transforming and strengthening education systems in Africa under the theme, "Standing Together for Resilient Education Systems in Times of Crisis".

Deputy Minister Mhaule stated that education systems should be robust enough to maintain continuity of learning in the face of adversity, yet sufficiently agile to evolve in response to new challenges and opportunities.

"This balance between steadfastness and adaptability is crucial in ensuring that our education systems can survive and thrive in times of crises.

In our deliberations, we must factor the educational aspirations that are articulated as guiding pillars of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030; as well as the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa, 2016-2025. These two frameworks are intended to reorient education systems of the world to meet the knowledge; competencies; skills; innovations; and creativity for a changing world, whilst promoting sustainable development."

In his address, President Ramaphosa said that the decolonisation of education on the African continent has been long overdue. "The discussions at this Conference, focusing

on tackling racism; decolonising education and promoting democracy; human rights; and trade union rights, are vital. We must challenge colonial theories and practices to build resilient education systems that are centred on African perspectives and experiences.

This requires a shift away from a Eurocentric worldview to embrace a more diverse and inclusive perspective. We must acknowledge and value the knowledge systems of all people and integrate them into our curricula and knowledge selection processes. The responsibility to nurture and defend the right to education extends to all spheres of society."

President Ramaphosa considers education as the cornerstone upon which societies build their future. "Through education, we cultivate respect for human rights, the rule of law and the principles of democracy. As the work of the UN High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession demonstrates, the adaptation of education systems to a rapidly changing world is one of the most important tasks facing us. This panel draws expertise from diverse stakeholders, including ministers of education; labour representatives; teacher unions; and civil society organisations.

It underscores the importance of educators' voices in finding solutions to educational challenges." The President added that educators play a fundamental and irreplaceable role in shaping societies, and their insights are invaluable in the quest for sustainable solutions. Curriculum reform that responds to the changing world of work is another vital task.

"In South Africa, we are on the brink of significant educational reform with the implementation of the Coding and Robotics curriculum from Grade R to Grade 9. This initiative is part of our broader strategy to integrate STEM subjects into our education system. By doing so, we aim to equip our learners with the digital skills necessary to thrive in a fast-paced world. Labour movements, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations in the educational sphere must collaborate to protect this critical space. Through such partnerships, we can prepare our learners to be active, informed citizens in democratic societies. The role of organisations such as Education International are vital. As advocates for quality education, your mission is to ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all," concluded the President.

Education News

Using AI technology, innovative Educate Girls wins WISE Prize for Education

EDWIN NAIDU

India's Safena Husain, Founder and Board Member of Educate Girls, was a worthy winner of the WISE Prize for Education – the first global award of its kind that honours an individual for an outstanding contribution to education.

Mumbai-based Husain, who spent time working in the health-care sector in South Africa, was recognized for dedicating 16 years to building the non-profit organisation focused on empowering communities for girls' education in some of India's hardest to reach villages.

An excited Husain told Inside Education after her triumph that her programme to reach the most vulnerable, ensuring that girls lives are transformed through learning, can be replicated throughout the world.

"We are happy to share our programmes with organisations wishing to use our model to change lives of girls through education," she said.

A video of the work undertaken in villages throughout India showed how, through champions, they would seek girls who would be working in the field or carrying out household chores and speak to their families to explain the importance of education to help them secure a better life.

Husain's journey with WISE began with a WISE Award in 2014 that acknowledged Educate Girls for its positive social impact and ability to scale. Over the years, Educate Girls has mobilised more than 1.4 million girls for enrolment and supported over 1.9 million children in their learning in India.

Adopting a precision targeting method using Artificial Intelligence (AI), Educate Girls can target, in five years, the same number of out-of-school girls, which would otherwise require 45 years. Through a network of over 21,000 community-based champions in some of the most marginalised communities in the country, the organisation has been working to break the inter-generational cycle of inequality and exclusion.

Under Husain's guidance, Educate Girls has evolved into a leading global force, harnessing innovative financing and AI technology to bridge the gender gap in



Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, awarded the prestigious WISE Prize for Education to Safena Husain, Founder and Board Member of Educate Girls.

education. This is mirrored in its global milestones: the delivery of the world's first Development Impact Bond in education, and the organisation becoming Asia's first The Audacious Project – which, housed at TED, is a collaborative funding initiative catalyzing social impact on a grand scale.

Commenting on the award, Husain said: "This is a collective win for all of us working toward girls' education, right from the government and local communities to dedicated gender champions and our supporters. It is a testament to the array of initiatives that are actively addressing this global challenge, embracing grassroots innovations and technology-driven solutions that are tirelessly working to ensure that every girl, in every village, is in school and learning well.

"Girls' education is the closest thing we have to a silver bullet to solve some of the world's most complex problems. We must recognise that the right to education is a girl's inherent right – a right that must always take center stage."

Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation (QF), spoke at the opening of the 11th edition of the WISE Summit taking place from 28-29 November in Doha, Qatar,

societal impact. Jeffrey Sachs, University Professor and Director of the Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University, addressed the economic impact of conflict on education in his keynote speech at the session.

Founded in 2009 by Qatar Foundation under the visionary leadership of its Chairperson, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, WISE (World Innovation Summit for Education) has evolved into an international, multi-sectoral platform dedicated to fostering innovation and evidence-based approaches in education. WISE 11, the summit's 11th edition, marks a significant milestone, emphasizing a new era of global educational transformation. Through its biennial summit, collaborative research, and several ongoing programs, WISE has become a global point of reference for new educational paradigms.

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organisation that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programmes across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, research and development, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF's world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation's development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programmes that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

A special plenary honored the 2023 WISE Awards winners this year for their innovative projects addressing global educational challenges and driving positive

Inside Education was a media partner at WISE 2023.

Teacher's Corner

My favourite teacher – Devi Sankaree Govender

EDWIN NAIDU

She may come across as feisty, but Devi Sankaree Govender is a friendly face with a warm smile. I once bumped into her at a famous Fourways eatery which made the best Cornish chicken curry on a Saturday. She posed for a selfie.

But get on her wrong side and one would easily become a dog's breakfast. The many tales of woe from those who have crossed paths with her cannot make for happy reading. But that is what happens when you play with fire.

One of the country's foremost investigative journalists and consumer champions, stet Devi is fearless. She made her name during 18 momentous years on Carte Blanche and is currently stirring up a hornet's nest among baddies on Devi, her self-titled 30-minute weekly blast on e-tv on Sunday evenings at 6pm.

Asked how difficult it was to crack it in investigative journalism, in a male dominated field – and what hope is there for young girls and boys who want to follow in her footsteps, stet Devi told Inside Education that television journalism may seem to be a really glamorous career choice but there is nothing glitzy about it.

"Behind the scenes there is a lot of slog, and you can forget working normal office hours. But, if you feel you have the gees for it, put your head down and get on with it," she added.

She has received several awards and accolades, including the 2022 GQ Woman of the year. But her goal is not awards. Instead, Devi, who has two children aged 22 and 20, is happiest fighting for the underdog. Taking on bullies is par for the course.

At 15 Devi watched Carte Blanche and made up her mind that her future lay in television. But her route to national television actually began as a teacher for a year before she joined the SABC's Radio Lotus, which has spawned many a talent plying their trade on the national stage.

Speaking about her school days at Umzinto Secondary School on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal, Devi shared her story on her favourite teacher.

• What was his/her name?
Radha Guppertsad Lalla

• Name of school attended and year/s?
I attended Umzinto Secondary School from 1985 to 1990

• How did your favourite teacher endear herself to you?

When I started high school, which in those years, you joined in Standard Five (Grade 7), I was always so fascinated by Mrs Lalla. She wore a sari to school every day and always had her hair in an updo. She looked so beautiful and really glamorous. My admiration for her was certainly from afar because she only taught Standard Nine and Matrics – so I had to wait a bit longer before I could join her class.

• What subjects did she teach you?

English. It was my favourite subject. I loved everything about it. The set-works, the grammar, the creative writing and most important of all – the class speeches. I had always been a voracious reader and gobbled up books at a fast pace. I also had a flair for speech and creative writing – I really did look forward to opportunities where I could flex myself.

• Did you look forward to her subject?

Absolutely!!!! Without a doubt. She was just so smart, and she did the cryptic crossword every day from the Natal Mercury. I felt we were kindred spirits and I love how she bent her mind, and mine too!

• What did you like about your teacher?

I had to wait till Matric when I finally got to sit in her English class. I loved how she challenged me and kept pushing me to experiment with new writing styles.

• What was your favourite subject at school?

English. There was no contest there!

• Has this influenced your choice of career?

Mrs Lalla and I shared a deep love for the English language. I knew that writing would be the backbone of any career I chose.

• What was the one phrase from any teacher that stuck with you or inspired you?

Mrs Lalla's famous line was "do not be a one trick pony."

• Have you kept in touch with your favourite teacher?

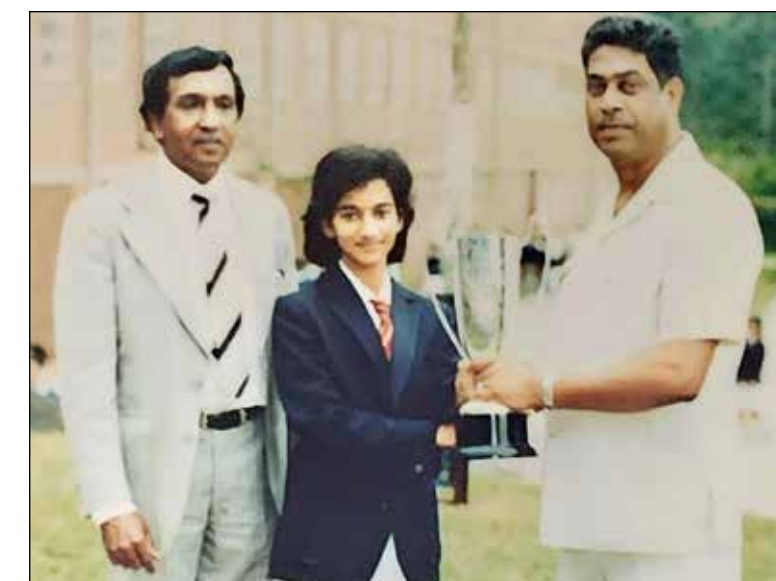
I did stay in touch with her, but she sadly passed away a few



Teacher to television, Devi Sankaree Govender, was a model pupil at Umzinto Secondary.



Radha Guppertsad Lalla



(Left) Principal Mr WS Moonsamy and (right) Mr K Ramsugit with Devi Sankaree Govender

years ago. The outpouring from her former pupils was testimony to the impact she had had on so many of us, growing up in apartheid South Africa.

• If so, what was the first meeting like beyond being a learner in the classroom?

She spoke to me for the first time when I was in Standard 5. I had won an essay competition where you had to write an impactful piece on road safety. I titled it "Licence to Kill" and I still remember that moment when she came up to me as I was leaving the principal's office and congratulated me with these words: "If you continue writing like that, then you will get an A in English in matric. But, you must continue to work hard at it." I was beyond thrilled that Mrs Lalla, herself, had acknowledged me.

• Why are teachers so important to society?

Teachers shape young minds. They provide safe environments

where their young charges can explore a variety of subjects. Most parents are so focused on getting their families across the breadline while teachers provide spaces where you are able to nurture your true self.

• Finally, what advice do you have for learners?
Don't be a one trick pony!!!

• On final final were you naughty inquisitive or chirpy at school?

I was very well-behaved. Head Girl of my high school. Extremely inquisitive and a bundle of energy.

• Did teacher's sigh: Oh here comes big mouth Devi?

Probably – but I doubt the majority would have. I was extremely supportive of teachers, and I wouldn't say I was argumentative.

• Is there anything you felt that was not asked and should have been?

All through school, I was surrounded by the most remarkable teachers – which is probably what motivated me to become a teacher myself! I'm a qualified senior phase educator. I taught for a year – Effingham Secondary (1994) and Nilgiri Secondary in (1995) before I joined SABC Radio fulltime.

• Anyone from your class (I know there is a huge Umzinto brigade in Jhb) doing amazing things and still in touch with you?

Three decades later, the Class of 1990, Umzinto Secondary, still shares a very strong bond. We are in daily contact via a WhatsApp group and everybody has done well in their own fields.

Education News



Emiritus Professor Maureen Robinson



Associate Professor Mpho-Entle Puleng Modise

Building the next generation of education researchers

MPHO-ENTLE PULENG MODISE & MAUREEN ROBINSON

In South Africa, much attention has been paid to the promotion of research in general and capacity-building in particular. For example, the White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation (2019) under the heading, 'Increased human capabilities and an expanded knowledge enterprise' indicates how knowledge from many disciplines interacts to deepen awareness of and assist in addressing South Africa's serious and long-standing challenges. The White Paper goes further to argue that "research and the creation of knowledge have far more than just instrumental value" (Department of Science and Technology 2019: 44) but also contribute to the development of an informed, empowered populace that functions efficiently, creatively, and ethically as a component of a democratic society.

Despite the interest in advancing research in the country, several investigations have highlighted concerns about the number and demographics of active researchers, as well as the systemic barriers to research promotion. Universities

South Africa (USAF), for example, noted that in 2019, just over a third of the teaching staff at universities were actively publishing, and 44% of senior lecturers and 82% of lecturers did not have a PhD.

To promote its commitment to supporting the next generation of scholars, the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) established the early career researchers' (ECR) portfolio on its executive committee in 2020. Significantly, the focus on supporting ECRs within SAERA was not only about research capacity building but was also derived from a strong concern to democratise research production processes. As part of this, the association has deliberately sought to challenge dominant discourses of performativity and competition in academia by fostering a collaborative culture of research engagement.

As executive members of SAERA, we were keen to investigate how ECRs experience SAERA's strategies to build research capacity. Such strategies include doctoral awards, public seminars, mentorships, support for writing for publication and, most importantly, establishing a community which provides crit-

ical and supportive engagement.

We consulted a sample of early career researchers who had participated in the various activities of SAERA. It was encouraging to hear about those strategies that ECRs felt were successful in promoting support and growth. They spoke about how exposure to the organisation had motivated them in their scholarly work. A culture of collaboration within a supportive research environment, networking and funding were highlighted as enabling factors in their development.

A few participants mentioned the lack of relevant support from their institutions and the need for proper mentoring. Participants indicated an appreciation for SAERA's approach, highlighting an openness to sharing resources and knowledge. This was contrasted with experiences in some other conferences where they felt a lack of early career researcher involvement and inclusion; for example, one participant said, 'many of the activities focused on established scholars'.

The ECRs made several requests for more practical assistance, on topics such as plagiarism and citation, supervision of postgraduate students, choosing a relevant re-

search design, methodology, and a mentoring programme. They also requested more opportunities for novice researchers to engage and collaborate with seasoned academics, especially to help those in less active research institutions. This would include investing in research capacity development and the coaching and mentoring of new researchers. Greater international collaboration was suggested, especially among SADC countries. At a practical level, it was suggested that SAERA consider creating avenues for funding and knowledge sharing among early researchers.

The findings of the study have shown the limitations of a narrow conception of capacity-building, and that "an accounting of publications, patents and doctorates does not fully capture the complexity of capacity building" (Lee & Kuzhabekova 2019: 343). While not denying the essential role of resources and infrastructure, we would argue for greater attention to building cultures of collaboration and support that allow for the flourishing of peer networks and reciprocal learning. In this way, the emphasis moves from seeing the purpose of research capacity-building as shifting from "what

is produced [outputs] to the production of the person who produces" (Lee & Boud 2009: 97).

It is encouraging to note that this approach is in line with recommendations made by the Council on Higher Education in its review of doctoral programmes. These recommendations include mentoring, where experienced individuals (who are not the main supervisors but are academically qualified) offer the student advice, informal support, and wisdom (complementary to formal supervision).

It is our view, and the view of SAERA, that an approach built on cultures of collaboration and support can impact positively on knowledge production and scholarly growth. In this way, more young researchers will advance in their careers, thus adding to the pool of experienced researchers in the country.

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Education News

Transforming education in South Africa: The promise of distance learning

ASHLEY GUNTER

Within the multi-faceted and ever-evolving context of South Africa, the notion of remote education arises as more than just an alternate instructional approach, but rather as a pivotal tool for driving societal development. Often called Open Distance eLearning (ODEL), the diverse and complex function of remote education in addressing educational disparities among marginalised communities is imperative in addressing limited access to higher education in South Africa.

There is a wealth of educational pedagogies and inspiration from teaching employed by universities such as UNISA in South Africa and the Open University in the UK that point to the transformational abilities of ODeL. Imagine a situation in which a young student residing in a geographically isolated South African community, distant from the vibrant educational hubs of urban areas, is able to access high-quality education via a laptop. This possibility already exists and ODeL presents a viable opportunity rather than a utopian concept. This phenomenon signifies a departure from conventional educational frameworks, effectively mitigating the geographical barrier that has historically limited access to educational resources primarily to urban regions.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to balance this positive perspective with a pragmatic evaluation of the obstacles that come with remote education. The digital divide, which is a prominent issue in South Africa, presents a substantial obstacle to the extensive implementation of distant learning. Access to reliable internet connectivity and the presence of digital devices are scarce in numerous rural and socioeconomically disadvantaged regions. It is imperative to acknowledge and rectify these inequities in order to promote the democratisation of education via digital platforms.

The advantageous nature of distance learning lies in its flexibility, enabling students to access educational resources at their own convenience. This attribute proves especially advantageous for those residing in marginalised commu-



Professor Ashley Gunter

nities. Many of these learners are faced with the challenge of balancing several commitments, such as work and family obligations, which renders traditional educational approaches unfeasible or unattainable. Distance education provides a viable alternative that effectively caters to these distinctive conditions, hence augmenting the accessibility of education.

The key factor in the achievement of online education lies in the imperative for high-quality content and efficient delivery techniques. Simply converting traditional textbooks and course materials into digital formats is insufficient. The educational material should possess qualities that captivate the audience, encourage active participation, and be customised to cater to the wide range of cultural and contextual requirements of students throughout South Af-

rica. The aforementioned stipulation highlights the need to provide educators with comprehensive training in both their respective disciplines and the effective use of online instructional methods. In the context of digital learning, it is crucial for educators to transition from conventional teaching roles to assume the responsibilities of facilitators and guides.

The significant impact of distance education on the workforce in South Africa should not be underestimated. In the context of elevated rates of unemployment and the dynamic requirements of the global economy, ODeL presents prospects for the enhancement of skills, progression in careers, and the pursuit of lifelong education. The significance of this facet of distance education is especially critical for adult learners who are aiming to augment their

that involves the collaboration of several stakeholders, including the government, corporate sector, and civil society. The scope of this investment should extend beyond technological infrastructure and involve the cultivation of comprehensive and pertinent educational content, as well as the provision of training for instructors.

Although distance education may not provide a comprehensive solution to the educational difficulties faced in South Africa, its capacity to bring about significant changes is unquestionable. It presents an opportunity to mitigate educational disparities by facilitating equal and inclusive access to high-quality education for marginalised populations. Nevertheless, the actualization of this potential is contingent upon a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles at hand and a deliberate endeavour to effectively tackle them.

ODeL serves as a promising avenue towards fostering inclusivity and empowerment within South African society. The successful implementation of distance learning necessitates a thorough and dedicated strategy to identifying and capitalising on its inherent advantages, particularly those offered by an institution like UNISA. By effectively integrating innovation, substantial investment, and a comprehensive comprehension of the distinctive South African context, distance education has the potential to transcend its temporary nature and become an essential element in fostering a more educated, empowered, and egalitarian nation. My research has shown that distance education possesses the capacity to uncover substantial educational opportunities in South Africa and beyond, when approached with a discerning and knowledgeable perspective. This development signifies a notable advancement in the pursuit of educational fairness and serves as a crucial instrument within the country's educational resources. By adopting this paradigm, South Africa has the potential to establish a path towards a more promising and equitable future for the whole country.

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Matthew Goniwe



Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance Chief Executive Sibusiso Mahlangu addressing delegates during the recent Schools Safety Indaba held at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, Ekurhuleni

MGSLG Strategy to combat the root cause of crime and violence in Gauteng schools

EDWIN NAIDU

The Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Education has designed a three-year programme to capacitate and promote safety at schools in the province.

“It is the mission of the Gauteng school safety programme to create centres of excellence with strong community links, quality learning and teaching, and effective management and governance,”

says Sibusiso Mahlangu, the Chief Executive Officer of the MGSLG. “In so doing, the strategy will help combat the root causes of crime and violence, and thereby advance social cohesion.”

Mahlangu was among the speakers at a high-level School Safety Indaba in Ekurhuleni on 11 November 2023 – part of the Safe Schools Campaign under Operation Kgutla Molao (Restore Order) – to mobilise different stakeholders to safeguard schools against criminal activities, especially during the holidays.

The Gauteng Department of

Education, under Education MEC Matome Chiloane, hosted the Indaba at the Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg, to evaluate the progress of the campaign so far, develop further interventions for emerging threats and provide a status update on identified high-risk schools in the province.

Chiloane launched Operation Kgutla Molao in response to reports of safety concerns at Gauteng schools and the programme, under the department and its partners, plans to deal with and reduce incidents of violence, bullying, suicide, substance abuse

and sexual harassment at schools.

With an over-arching strategy to find solutions to escalating crime, which manifested itself on several occasions during this year’s National Senior Certificate examinations, the Safety Summit brought key stakeholders together to collectively agree on a way forward.

The School Safety Capacity Building Programme is premised on the training of school safety committees and forms part of the programme to revive these committees at all public schools, empower teachers with the tools to positively manage discipline in

class, provide training to school governing bodies (SGBs) on school safety issues and conduct advocacy programmes at community level to promote social cohesion and discipline.

The plan is two-fold, with the first part focused on training on school safety and the roles and responsibilities of the safety committee; the second phase is the monitoring, coaching and certification of all participants. As part of the second phase, all schools at high risk have to, among other tasks, conduct a safety audit for the year, compile monthly safety

Matthew Goniwe



Robust debate took place during the schools safety indaba, organised by the Gauteng Education department, as part of the provincial government’s strategy to tackle the scourge of violence in school

reports, compile and revise safety plans on a quarterly basis or as recommended by the SGB, draw up safety programmes and make provision for the representation by the school’s safety officer and/

or principal on the cluster.

In addition, Mahlangu says, the programme will also empower SGBs and SGB Associations with dispute resolution skills to ensure proper processes and the neces-

sary skills to conduct disciplinary hearings.

Overall, he adds, the programme seeks to be more remedial than relying on the expulsion and criminalisation of learners. “It

is only when all else fails that the disciplinary committee should request the expulsion of learners, so it is important to keep updated files of all learner behaviour,” Mahlangu adds.

The programme will be implemented over a three-year period by the MGSLG and the Gauteng Department of Education to ensure that all public schools, especially those in townships, informal settlements, hostels and/or crime-dense areas are capacitated and supported.

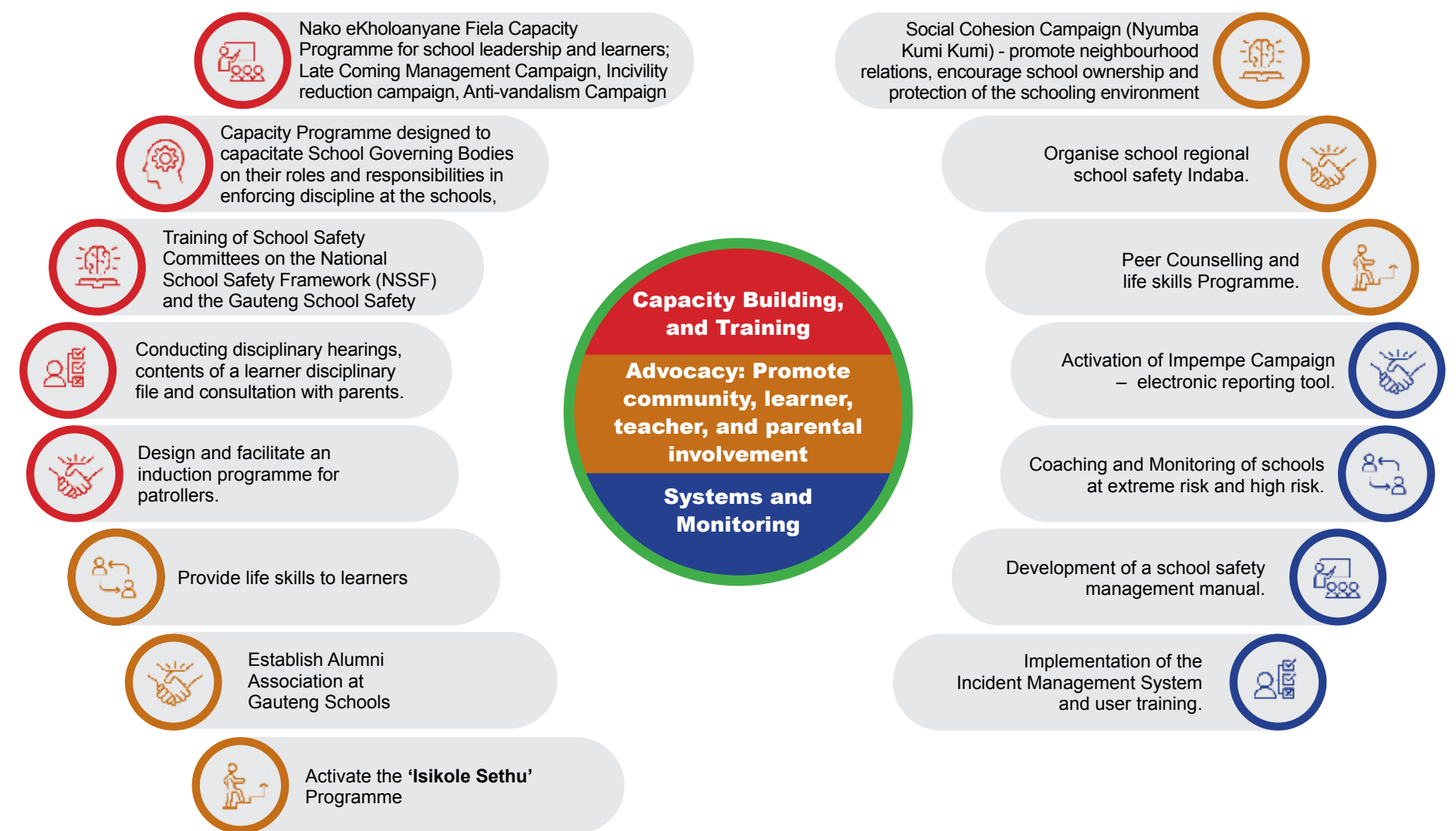
The intervention plan will be implemented by working together with safety coordinators and managers within the GDE so that efforts are synergized and not duplicated. According to the South African Schools Act, SGBs are responsible for the safety of schools. However, according to Mahlangu, SGB safety committees do not exist or are non-functional. It is against this background that the plan proposes the resuscitation of safety committees among other steps to stop crime at schools.

Mahlangu says the programme will be rolled out over a period of three years, as it seeks to make an impact on all schools found to be at high risk because of several factors, including crimes against school infrastructure, violence against learners and/or teachers, and crimes and violence that hamper effective learning and a safe environment.

The key objective of the campaign is to ensure that all ordinary public schools in Gauteng have functional school safety committees.

“This proposed intervention action plan will be implemented over a period of three years with the year 2023/2024 focused on the improvement of hotspots and schools at high risk,” Mahlangu says. “The year 2024/2026 will see the finalisation of the implementation of the current Gauteng Safety Strategy and inform the formulation of a five-year cycle strategy. Information gathering and implementation of education sector safety policies shall remain at the forefront of ensuring safety at schools.”

School Safety Plan 2023-2025



Matthew Goniwe

Chiloane praises MGSLG's role in improving the quality of education as it celebrates 21 years

MATOME CHILOANE

When the Gauteng Education Department conceptualised the formation of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance 21 years ago, it was just a dream. But we had a solid vision. It was one rooted in a commitment to continuously develop all stakeholders in the education system in the province.

Our reflection of the past 21 years has been nothing short of a marvel. The work of the institution has not only been an infinite well of impressive success, but now also serves as an inspiration across the country. Other provinces have reached out to us enquiring about the model of the MGSLG. This is a demonstration that the results of the sweat and hard work of the men and women who have committed to ensuring the institution is a beacon of light, is clear for all to see.

The school has undoubtedly served its mandate which includes being responsible for the training of school governing bodies, teacher development and student bodies. This gives us a great sense of contentment.

For the past 21 years, the institution has achieved its role of ensuring that everyone is capacitated. And this is something that we want to see continue. Our role in the department is simple. It is to ensure that we educate and prepare those who are the future of our province and country to meaningfully contribute to society because everyone's journey in life starts with educators. Having acknowledged that this responsibility is centred around teacher and school leadership development, we must guarantee that we consistently resource the institution.

Undoubtedly, we are full of praise to the board and staff of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance for their unwavering commitment and exemplary efforts extended by the school in fostering training and augmenting capacities of schools, teachers, SGBs, and RCLs.

The task ahead is daunting, and we look forward to walking this



Gauteng Education MEC Matome Chiloane

journey alongside you. The province was committed to ensuring that learners – and teachers benefited from the latest in technology to make an impact in the classroom.

As a province, we have decided to future-proof our schools, teachers, and learners, by staying ahead of the curve when it comes to the role and use of digital technologies in teaching, learning, and curriculum.

Your institution and your partners will continue to play a massive role in this regard. The infusion of coding and robotics in education is no longer a matter of preference; it's a critical pivot.

Continually training our teachers on the new curriculum, in-

formation and communication technology (ICT), and new teaching methods has been central to the overall performance of our schools. The MGSLG also has the mandate to train school governing bodies; they are charged with the important duty of securing peaceful and conducive teaching and learning environments. They need to understand their mandates within the schools as do the teachers.

It is also important to reflect on how the institution has leaned on its innovative capabilities to adapt to the times. Education, like all facets of life, is an ever-evolving feature of the human development process. Most recently,

during the Covid-19 pandemic, we witnessed how ICT was a catalyst to the few solutions we could lean on to navigate the challenges we were confronted with concerning face-to-face teaching and learning. However, because some of educators in the province had already received ICT training from the MGSLG, the transition was not impossible to achieve in many areas.

Our desire as a province is for the institution to continue in this vein. We must focus on these skills and include even more beneficiaries. We envision an education system in the province where all school governing bodies are well-informed and knowledgeable

about their constitutions and the responsibilities they are elected to meet. We want to see educators whose ability to adapt to new curricula and methods of teaching, is seamless. Learners must be taught leadership skills so that they too can meaningfully contribute to building effective and successful schools. The development of the respective stakeholders will also lead to a more harmonised relationship between the entire school body and leadership.

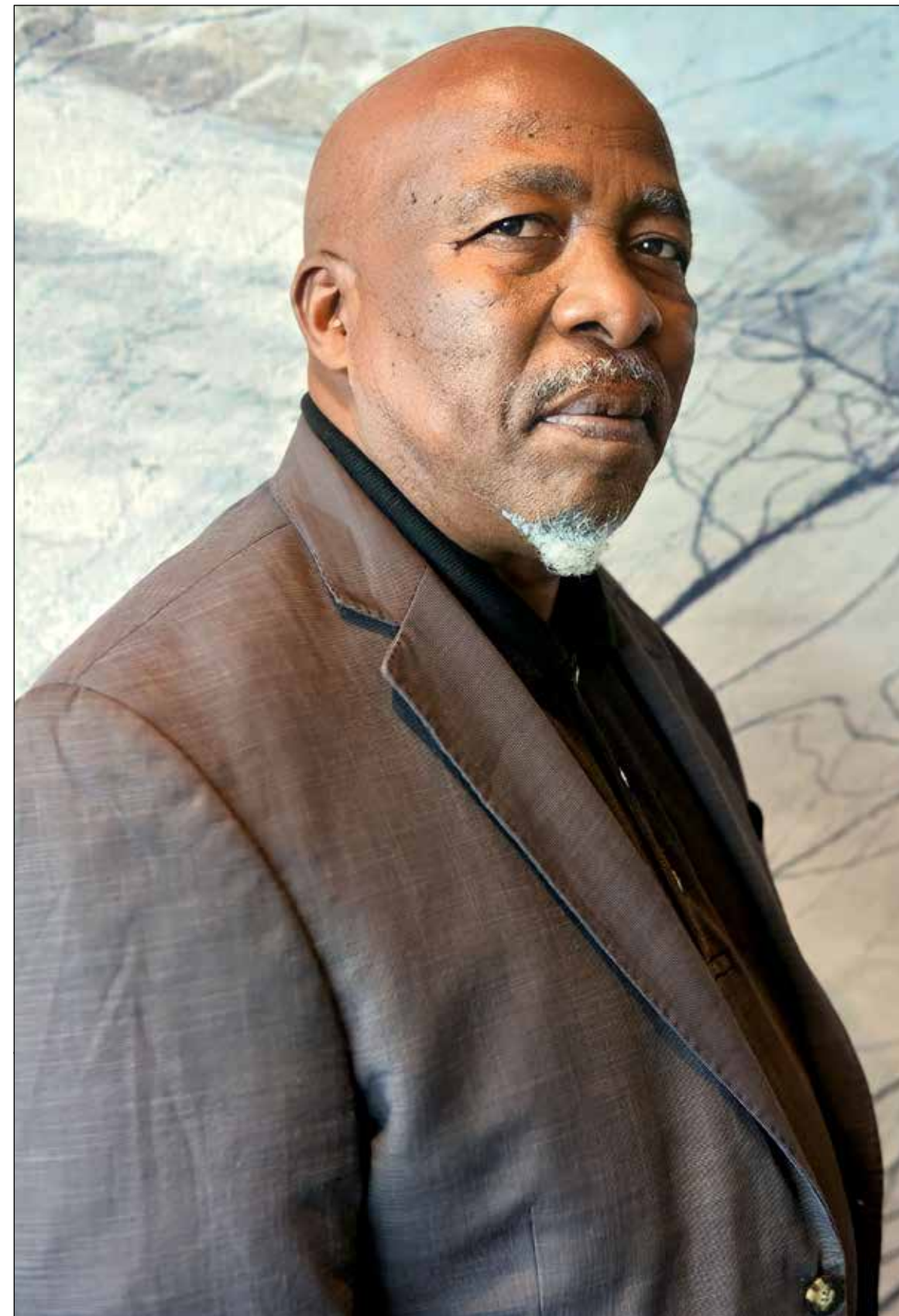
For 21 years, the MGSLG has pushed the boundaries. The programmes on offer have adapted to meet the needs of our beneficiaries.

And this is why we are confident about the future of the institution for many decades to come. The work done in the past 21 years is no small feat. However, as we prepare for a more advanced world, with evolution moving at a swift pace, the institution must prepare to respond to the needs of the thousands of early childhood development (ECD) teachers, who are now a responsibility of the Basic Education Department. There are some 3000 private and 4000 public ECD centres in the province. One of the key reasons for transferring the portfolio from the Social Development Department to the Department of Basic Education was to centralise the sector.

At the heart of this work is the need to capacitate teachers with the necessary skills to mould South Africans so that they can build the country of our dreams as their development will have been well crafted from their very foundation. I want to congratulate the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance on being instrumental in the education landscape not only in the province, but across the country over the past 21 years.

It is with great anticipation and hope that I look forward to joining hands with the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance to traverse this transformative path. Let us forge ahead with unified resolve and unwavering dedication to elevate our educational standards, foster innovation, and ultimately, build a brighter, more equitable future for all our learners.

Matthew Goniwe



Professor Mbulelo Goniwe

LUCAS LEDWABA'

Matthew Goniwe's excellent skills and commitment to teaching and empowering the community extended way beyond the classroom. His discipline, passion and dedication to the profession and deep love for his community made him an outstanding educator and community builder.

This is how Professor Mbulelo Goniwe, a former student of the slain political activist remembers the man who has come to epitomise the ethos of ethical, committed and dedicated leadership and servitude both inside and outside the classroom.

Professor Goniwe was a pupil of Matthew's during his high school years in Mqanduli, a rural village in the Eastern Cape in the early 1970s. "He was a patriot, someone who

had a genuine love for the motherland and his people, starting from his own family. He had that kind of love. That really inspired so many of us to actually achieve the best of their potential. He was that kind of person," said Prof Goniwe.

"That's how this whole passion for education is centred, in that love. That was the springboard of his commitment and the innovative, interconnectedness of education and achievement," he said.

Matthew was Prof Goniwe's ta'omncinci, his father's younger brother. In his youth the family entrusted him into the hands of Matthew, the man who because of his prowess in boxing, was nicknamed Bullet.

"I was handed over to him to groom me and even look after my needs. That's what led me then to be part of the active resistance, taking forward the family tradition that has been imparted on us from

generation to generation," he said.

Prof Goniwe is an academic, a former political activist and ANC member of Parliament.

Matthew specialised in mathematics and physical science education and always went the extra mile to impart knowledge on his learners.

"His world outlook and the life he led was to empower the black child to really understand mathematics and physical science to broaden their horizons," said Prof Goniwe.

The school in Mqanduli, like many in rural areas and townships at the time had no such resources as laboratories or libraries. Instead of resigning himself to the fate laid out by the authorities then, to be part of the active resistance, Matthew took matters into his own hands.

"And he went the extra mile. Sometimes, he would use his own salary to buy material to do exper-

Matthew Goniwe's legacy a gift for future generations

iments," Prof Goniwe recalled. The theme for this year's 10th anniversary lecture of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership is Transformative Leadership for Social Change - Empowering the next generation.

Prof Goniwe believes that to be able to empower the next generation teachers need to possess and implement some of Matthew's qualities.

"The love for his people, the flora and fauna, and everything that you find. Then the second thing would be the dedication. You have to be dedicated to what you do," he said.

He cited the example of how during Matthew's time, his work wouldn't stop at the ringing of the bell in the afternoon.

"Imagine [back then] there were less teachers, but after school, they would coach rugby, they would coach athletics, boxing. They would do a lot of extramural activities, not only focused on what they were paid for.

"So they heavily invested in us because we were actually the generation that would follow them," he said.

This kind of dedication, coupled with an inclusive leadership style made Matthew a shining star and beacon of hope in his community.

"He had that participatory leadership that doesn't seek to take the credibility for achievement. He would delegate tasks to people and try to empower them to be able to deliver to on their expectations," Prof Goniwe said.

"He knew the importance of collective leadership, a servitude kind of leadership where you really want to serve the people and not to be worshipped or adored or be populist," he said.

Above all, Matthew understood how his position as a schoolteacher was perceived and respected in the broader community. He knew that in the eyes of the community he was not just a man who stood in front of a class with a chalk.

"My own understanding of things is that, firstly, people, so-

ciety, communities, where we are from, looked up to the teachers and ministers of religion as important societal assets. So they had an unquestionable respect for such people. They respected them," Prof Goniwe reflects.

Added to that Matthew had already proven his political mettle after serving four years on Robben Island after being convicted for furthering the aims of the ANC which was banned at the time.

Prof Goniwe believes that institutions such as the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership have a significant role to play in society.

"They are very critical because once you seek to define yourself outside of your heritage, that is a very problematic approach to life. You need to know and learn from your forebears.

"And once you have institutions like the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership that seeks to uphold, preserve and advance a legacy of people like Matthew; it then speaks to the entire liberation struggle, heroes and heroines.

"That legacy is very beneficial to the future generations because they have to understand the link, how far did they go, and what is it that they achieved. How you take forward their vision, interpret it in the context of the present," he said.

It's been 38 years since Matthew and his three comrades were brutally tortured and killed by Apartheid death squads. Yet his name and the legacy of his work continue to live on.

"Memories fade, new people come up and so on. But he remains one of the few people that even after 30 years of their death is still very prominent in the thoughts of many, many people. There are people that are never spoken about. After a month of their death, they are forgotten.

"That's why I said that the approach of the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and many other legacy preservation and promotion activities also contribute to that memory to be kept alive," he said.

Skilling Mzansi

UP-led unveiling of Mamelodi Business Hub provides a beacon of hope for youth entrepreneurial skills development

EDWIN NAIDU

The youth of Mamelodi have a one-stop shop for skills to boost their entrepreneurial aspirations after the University of Pretoria (UP) formally unveiled the revitalised Mamelodi Business Hub (MBH) recently.

Launched by UP and established in collaboration with UNICEF South Africa and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the Hub on the Mamelodi Campus offers young people in Mamelodi and further afield the opportunity to realise their entrepreneurial ambitions.

The Hub has been reborn as a space for youth to grasp opportunities to pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions, transforming their social and economic prospects and, at the same time, improving the well-being of their communities and the country.

“Mindful of the challenges facing youth and our nation, as a university we strive to become integral to providing sustainable solutions, as it is on this initiative with committed partners. Our vision for the Mamelodi Business Hub is for it to become a centre of township revival, producing entrepreneurs who will contribute towards making a societal impact on their communities,” says UP Interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor Themba Mosia.

Originally known as the Mamelodi Business Clinic, the Hub was established in 2011 by the Department of Business Management in UP’s Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to enable community development through innovative interventions and to enhance the development of entrepreneurs in the local community.

Although relaunched in May 2022, the unveiling of the Hub, which now provides a significant boost for the youth of Mamelodi township via a booking system to utilise the space, took place on 15 September 2023.

Quality-driven community engagement initiatives

The unveiling cements the solid strategic partnership between UP, PwC and UNICEF South Africa, built on



Back row, from left: Samantha Rabie and Carto Abrams-Swartz from the UP Department of Business Management. Seated: Koketso Makatu, Teboho Ntisa and Lebogang Lebeso.

the united vision of a shared social impact. PwC and UNICEF funded and advised UP on the Hub’s new business model and programme.

“For over a decade, the Hub has modestly ensured that entrepreneurship becomes embedded in the Department of Business Management’s quality-driven community engagement initiatives that drive social impact through interdisciplinary-oriented programmes. We are proud that the rebirth of the Hub emerges out of a greater vision for South Africa and Africa,” adds Professor Alex Antonites, Head of UP’s Department of Business Management.

In a positive step for the youth of Mamelodi, for the first time, entrepreneurs can book time slots to utilise the space for meetings and collaborations with various stakeholders.

The Hub will also play a key role in helping to develop women’s leadership skills, introducing the fourth industrial revolution, and co-creating innovative products and services for young entrepreneurs via UP’s interdisciplinary-orientated teams and strategic partners.

In addition, it plans on merging the needs of the micro-business environment in Mamelodi with the skills of UP undergraduate and postgraduate students, creating a base for collaborative international research and showcasing a unique entrepreneurship enablement model to be replicated in South Africa

and Africa with university partners.

“Our partners, PwC, and UNICEF South Africa, have empowered us at UP to take a significant step toward addressing the profound challenge of unemployment in South Africa, especially among the youth. This exemplifies the ‘thuma mina’ attitude,” adds Professor Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.

Proving skills for a fast-changing world

Shirley Machaba, PwC South Africa CEO, says aligning to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for a greater impact is part of PwC’s societal purpose strategy.

“The collaboration between PwC, UP and UNICEF allows us to focus on these thematic areas, specifically quality education, decent work and economic growth and reducing inequalities by bridging the skills gap in communities lacking opportunities. Young people must be allowed to be educated, work and be innovative. By improving the chances of employability and fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in the youth through the Mamelodi Business Hub, we are giving rise to positive transformation in South Africa and on the continent. PwC is proud to be part of this initiative, drawing on our firm’s skills, resources and experience to be a force for good.”

Marthle du Plessis, PwC Africa

Workforce of the Future Leader, says there is no greater way to make an impact than to provide youth with the skills, resources and platforms they need to survive and thrive in a fast-changing world.

“We are proud to have assisted UNICEF South Africa and the University of Pretoria in launching the Mamelodi Business Hub as we are seeing a daily impact in the lives of countless youth. As a firm, we are committed to empowering young, talented people with the required skills to succeed. Key to this is bridging the stark digital divide that exists.

While this is a complex problem that requires all stakeholders to work together, we have shown that through the launch of this centre, it is possible to make the world a more resilient, capable and inclusive space.”

Testimonials

Carto Abrams-Swartz, from the Department of Business Management at UP, describes the Hub’s transformative presence in the community “as a beacon of hope and progress.”

“It symbolises not just economic growth but also the empowerment of our community’s dreams and aspirations. It’s a testament to the belief that by nurturing local talent and fostering innovation, we can collectively shape a brighter future for all,” she adds.

Some of the five inspiring entrepreneurs, part of the “break and build” initiative, shared their experiences during the unveiling.

Lebogang Lebeso says the Hub is a life-changing initiative that will prepare Mamelodi entrepreneurs for the employment of today and, more importantly, the occupations of tomorrow. “The upskilling assistance will allow Mamelodians to thrive economically in South Africa and the world.”

Reatile Moalusi adds that among the benefits of being part of the Hub is its networking opportunities, connecting businesses with various stakeholders. “The thoughtfully designed interior fosters a creative and inspired atmosphere which, in turn, encourages the pursuit of excellence and innovation.”

Busiswe Ghazu says being part of the unveiling was akin to a moment in history as the Mamelodi Business Hub offers the beginning of a brighter future for all in the township.

More than 2 000 young people trained

“Empowering South Africa’s youth with entrepreneurial opportunities is not just a priority; it’s our pathway to a brighter future. Through collaboration with UNICEF’s Generation Unlimited initiative, we’re lighting the way for young minds to shape their destinies, uplifting themselves, their communities and our nation,” says UP’s Samantha Rabie.

UNICEF South Africa’s Chief of Education, Hana Yoshimoto, says the organisation is proud that the Generation Unlimited collaboration with PwC and the University of Pretoria responds to the pressing issue of limited access to youth-focused business development services in townships and rural areas.

She adds that UNICEF South Africa is pleased that over 2 000 young people in the Mamelodi township and beyond have benefited from this partnership’s face-to-face and online entrepreneurship training.

“We look forward to scaling this up beyond Gauteng province to ensure that every young entrepreneur is included, starting with the upcoming pilot in the Northern Cape. This hub, strategically located in the heart of Mamelodi, serves as a beacon of hope and opportunity for the youth in Mamelodi, who are pivotal to the community’s advancement.”

Skilling Mzansi

Deputy Minister praises impact among youth of Huawei initiative to plant Seeds for the Future

EDWIN NAIDU

“Together, we must ensure that the benefits of the digital age are accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstances. Scaling up skills development to support innovation and the digital revolution is an investment in the future. It’s not only about empowering individuals with the tools to succeed but also about driving economic growth and societal progress.”

This was the message from Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Philly Mapulane at the Seeds for the Future, Huawei’s global CSR flagship ICT student training programme, which has been running in South Africa since 2016 in partnership with the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT)

Acknowledging appreciation for Huawei’s partnership and collaboration in a broad range of initiatives aimed at nurturing ICT skills, including Seeds for the Future, the Deputy Minister said: “It has been seven years since the initiative started and it remains an important platform in our pursuit of bridging the digital divide.”

This year, Huawei has recruited 12 outstanding candidates from universities in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Free State and Gauteng. The programme also targets a 50-50 gender split.

The transformative power of technology education, giving back to communities and continuous learning were the key messages from speakers attending the annual Huawei Seeds for the Future 2023 programme launch in Woodmead, Johannesburg.

So far, 102 students have benefited from the programme, which aims to ensure that tech-savvy and change-resilient young people have the skills and mindsets needed to be competitive in the workplaces of the future.

The key focus areas for this year are digitalisation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

Kian Chen, Deputy CEO, Huawei South Africa, said South Africa’s digital economy development depends on ICT infrastructure development, but without an abundant and sustainable ICT talent supply, the target will be too far to reach. “We want to cultivate young people who are socially responsible and innovative,” he added. “We want our Seeds to think about how technology can be used in the future to solve complex global problems, such as climate change, and the green transition.”

During the event, Seeds for the Future alumni who are now Huawei employees shared their experiences of the programme and their growth at Huawei, which proves the programme not only provides a learning platform but also a career path for South Africa’s outstanding youth.

Among them was Siyabonga Thomas Shandu, a University of Johannesburg graduate who now works as a project lead at Huawei. “In my two years at Huawei, I’ve been privileged to contribute to the Openserve FTTH (Fibre to the Home) Project, witnessing more South African households and businesses being connected with Openserve Fibre,” he said. “This journey has not only been about numbers but about growth – both personal and professional growth.”

Munyai Vhutuhawe, a computer science graduate from the University of Limpopo, who works as an IT Facility & Equipment Engineer at Huawei, said: “In 2021, when I participated in the programme, our team made it to the top three globally in the Seeds for the Future Tech4Good competition for our project aimed at protecting South Africa’s rhino population from illegal poaching.”

University of the Witwatersrand graduate and current Huawei IP Technical Engineer Basani

Mathebula described the programme as a “transformative experience” that provided her with a “unique platform to dive deep into the world of technology and gain valuable hands-on knowledge.”

“It has not only equipped me with technical skills,” she said of the programme, “but has also nurtured my passion for innovation and fuelled my aspirations to contribute to the telecommunications industry as a wireless, microwave and IP Technical Engineer in the MTN Huawei Project.”

Kim Smalls, one of this year’s students, spoke about how much she was looking forward to grasping the opportunities presented by Seeds for the Future. “Imagine a world where technology breaks down barriers, where opportunities are accessible to all, and where innovation drives positive change,” she said. “This is the world we can create together. As we embark on this Seeds journey, let us embrace the excitement and possibilities that lie ahead. Let us harness our collective knowledge, inspire one another, and make a lasting impact on the world around us.”

Originally from the community of Malibu Village in Blue Downs, South Africa, her story is one of ambition, resilience, and a desire to make a difference. “I come from a



Philly Mapulane, Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies at the Seeds for the Future event.

close-knit family of 4. It is their belief in my potential that has fuelled my determination to chase my dreams and work towards a better future. Malibu Village, like many underprivileged communities, faces its fair share of challenges. Yet, it is within the midst of these challenges that my passion for change took root. I have witnessed firsthand the power of determination, the strength of community, and the transformative impact that individuals can make when they strive for something greater than themselves,” said Smalls.

Nikkesh Pillay, a third-year student at the University of Pretoria pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in (Informatics) Information Systems, said her journey in the world of technology began at a young age, inspired by an uncle who is a computer programmer.

“I always loved listening to the various projects he was working on. I’ve witnessed how the programmes he developed impacted positively on the company and made operations more efficient and effective. Technology has

made it possible for the world, amid the unprecedented global crisis we experienced, Covid-19, to continue to function, monitor and recover from the consequences of the pandemic. Technology has become even more important now in the ‘new normal’ with many working remotely and online. The resilience of us as humans to adapt and create new platforms has intrigued me and reinforced my enthusiasm for ICT,” she said.

As a young woman, she said her goal is to use the skills obtained to motivate young women to empower themselves to pursue IT and business skills in this technology driven world.

“This opportunity with Huawei Seeds for The Future Programme has provided me with an excellent foundation for my career development and has further strengthened my passion for the IT environment. The Huawei programme turned learning into a truly wonderful adventure, making it an experience that I’ll cherish and carry with me in all my future endeavours,” she said.



Sports

PlayerNation unites communities through sport with summer athletics games in the Karoo

STAFF REPORTER

Following the success of the winter games in July this year, PlayerNation brought yet another wave of excitement to the Karoo earlier this month, with its much-anticipated summer athletics games completing on December 5 and 6. School learners, communities and surroundings had an unforgettable experience. The two-day event provided not only fun to sport enthusiasts but also relaxation for residents and school learners in the Karoo, offering a much-needed opportunity to unwind after long exams.

The winter holiday sports programme attracted more than 1000 young people, boys and girls from Somerset-East, Cookhouse, Bedford, and Adelaide communities. The programme, featuring rugby, soccer, netball, and indigenous games, surpassed expectations and set the stage for a comprehensive rollout.

“PlayerNation is all about showing the incredible impact that sports can have on our young people, shaping their future in ways beyond imagination. We are thrilled to bring this amazing wave of excitement to the Karoo with our upcoming summer athletics games,” said John O’Connor, CEO of Arch Group Holdings and its Institute of Sport.

“The games are not just about competition; they are about empowering youth through sports excellence. We are inviting all communities in the Karoo and surroundings to join us in this thrilling two-day event,” he added.

The two-day event took place at Bedford, Eastern Cape, and at-



Schoolchildren from various communities in the Karoo had a great time playing a variety of different sports in December. Photos: Eddie Mtsweni

tracted an overwhelming participation of young people who eagerly engaged in a day filled with fun, and the joy of sports.

“This unique platform provides young athletes with the opportunity to showcase their skills, promote active living, and foster a sense of pride in their accomplishments. We could not wait to welcome the scores of talented individuals who will contribute to the vibrant sports community that we are building,” said O’Connor.

PlayerNation, is an initiative developed by the Institute of Sport partnering with Exxaro as the first founder partner, through its renewable energy business Cennergi. It was launched in May 2023. With a multifaceted approach encompassing sport, health, education, and skills development, PlayerNa-

tion, in partnership with the Department of Sport and the Department of Basic Education aims to become the ultimate school sports programme, impacting 28,000 schools nationwide.

Designed as a day out event in the Karoo, for young people, family and friends, the summer games focused on empowering youth through sports excellence, contributing to their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Cennergi’s Economic Development and Community Programmes Coordinator in Amakhala Emoyeni Windfarm, Mr. Simphiwe Mbenya, expressed the organisation’s pride in supporting the programme to create a lasting impact on South African schools and communities. “PlayerNation goes beyond sculpting



athletes; it’s about cultivating a new generation of champions and laying the foundation for a nationwide movement that extends beyond sports.”

“At Cennergi, we believe in contributing to the communities that we serve, and partnering with PlayerNation aligns with our commitment to holistic development. We are proud to support an initiative that creates a positive impact on the lives of young individuals,” he added.

The summer athletics games featured various types of sports including, soccer, rugby and netball and indigenous games.

Reflecting on the winter games, School Governing Body Chairperson for Templeton High School, Rudi Arends noted with satisfaction the remarkable transfor-

mation witnessed among school learners in the community. He stated that the spark of interest in sports that ignited during the winter games has continued to grow.

“It’s heartening to see our learners eagerly anticipating future sports games with such enthusiasm,” he said. “The excitement and impact of the winter games have not only lingered within the school but has extended beyond our school gates. It’s not just the learners who are enthusiastic; even parents have expressed their desire for these games.”

Arends urged learners and communities in the Karoo to come out in full support and embrace the summer games as an opportunity to connect, enjoy, and actively participate in promoting a healthy lifestyle.

